



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FALL WATERFOWL SEASONS WILL BE SIMILAR TO LAST YEAR'S, BUT CLOSURES POSSIBLE IN PARTS OF CALIFORNIA

Waterfowl hunters will find hunting regulations similar to last year's in most areas this fall under final regulations established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for the 1987-88 hunting season.

In California, however, waterfowlers face a possible season closure in some counties unless proposed nontoxic shot requirements are approved by the State. Under the final regulations published by the Service, waterfowl seasons will not be opened in the proposed California nontoxic shot zones pending a State decision on approval of those zones. Although California consented to the nontoxic shot requirements in June, the California Fish and Game Commission recently withdrew the consent for "reconsideration" during its August meeting. The decision was then postponed until late September. The Service will publish final rules regarding the season in those areas upon notification of California's approval.

Generally, this year's hunting regulations continue restrictions instituted in 1985 to reduce duck harvests. "Waterfowlers have strongly backed efforts to reduce the duck harvest, and most recognize the need to continue conservative regulations while duck populations are low," said Service Director Frank Dunkle. "The support hunters have given these regulations is appreciated."

Nontoxic (steel) shot zones will be expanded this fall in the first year of a 5-year schedule to require nontoxic shot for waterfowling throughout the country in 1991. Final nontoxic shot requirements for most States were published in July, and hunters should check State regulations to be sure they are familiar with this year's nontoxic shot requirements.

The proposed nontoxic shot zones in California where the season remains closed at this time include Butte, Colusa, Contra Costa, Glenn, Imperial, Merced, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties, and, in the Northeastern Zone, portions of Siskiyou, Shasta, Sierra, Tehama, and Plumas Counties and all of Lassen and Modoc Counties.

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The Service is prohibited by law from spending funds to implement and enforce nontoxic shot regulations without State approval. However, under Federal migratory bird laws, hunting seasons nationwide are closed unless opened by the Service through annual regulations. The Service previously has stated that because of the need to eliminate lead poisoning in waterfowl and endangered bald eagles that feed upon waterfowl, the Service will not open hunting seasons in areas where nontoxic shot requirements are proposed unless the State approves the requirements. Lead poisoning occurs when waterfowl swallow spent lead shot while feeding. Bald eagles may get lead poisoning from ingesting lead shot carried in the bodies of ducks and geese upon which they feed.

1987-88 REGULATIONS IN BRIEF

Highlights of the 1987-88 hunting season frameworks are as follows. States are now in the process of selecting their individual seasons from these frameworks, and hunters should check State regulations for details before going afield.

The season on canvasback ducks will be closed in the Atlantic, Mississippi, and Central Flyways, as was the case last year, because the eastern breeding population of this species is below the objective of 360,000.

Atlantic Flyway: a 40-day duck season from October 1 through January 18, with a daily bag limit of 4 to include no more than 3 mallards (only 1 hen), 1 pintail, 2 wood ducks (with exceptions), 1 black duck, or 1 fulvous tree duck. States may select the point system, under which 100 point birds are black ducks and female mallards; redheads, wood ducks (with exceptions), and hooded mergansers count 70 points; blue-winged teal, cinnamon teal, wigeon, gadwall, shovelers, scaup, green-winged teal, and mergansers (except hooded mergansers) count 20 points; male mallards, pintails, and other duck species count 35 point each.

There is no change in the daily bag limit for Canada geese except for a reduction from three to one in the Pennsylvania counties of Erie, Mercer, Butler, and Crawford to protect geese that winter in North and South Carolina. A special season for resident Canada geese will be held in Massachusetts' coastal duck zone from January 21 to February 5.

Mississippi Flyway: a 40-day duck season between October 3 (October 1 in Wisconsin) and January 17, with a daily bag limit of 4 ducks to include no more than 2 mallards (only 1 hen), 1 black duck, 2 wood ducks (with exceptions), 2 pintails, or 1 redhead. States may select the point system, under which 100 point birds are black ducks and female mallards; redheads, wood ducks (with exceptions), and hooded mergansers count 70 points; blue-winged teal, cinnamon teal, wigeon, gadwall, shoveler, scaup, green-winged teal, and mergansers (except hooded mergansers) count 20 points; male mallards, pintails, and all other duck species count 35 points each. A 10 percent increase in harvest will be permitted for Mississippi Valley population Canada geese in Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Regulations for Canada geese in Michigan have been somewhat

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liberalized and those in Wisconsin adjusted since the proposed hunting regulations were published in the August 14 Federal Register.

In the Central Flyway, the duck season will be between October 3 and January 17, with a 51-day season in the Low Plains Management Unit and a 67-day season in the High Plains Mallard Management Unit (roughly, west of the 100th meridian, as described in State regulations). States may select the point system, under which female mallards, black ducks, and mottled ducks count 100 points each; wood ducks, redhead and hooded merganser, and in Texas only blackbellied whistling ducks and fulvous whistling ducks count 70 points; blue-winged, green-winged and cinnamon teal, scaup, gadwall, wigeon, shoveler, and merganser (except hooded) count 20 points each, and each pintail, drake mallard, and duck of other species and sexes is 35 points. The conventional bag limit is 4 ducks, but can include no more than 3 mallards (1 hen), 3 pintails, 1 redhead, 1 hooded merganser, or 2 wood ducks.

Goose seasons and bag limits are unchanged from last year except in Montana where there are separate and increased daily bag and possession limits for light and dark geese.

In the Pacific Flyway, duck seasons will be between October 3 and January 10 with a 79-day season in most areas. The bag limit is 5 ducks, to include no more than 4 mallards (1 hen), 4 pintails (1 hen), or either 2 canvasbacks or 2 redheads or 1 of each.

The basic daily bag and possession limit for geese is 6, provided the daily bag limit includes no more than 3 white geese (snow, including blue, and Ross' geese) and 3 dark geese. In Washington and Idaho, the daily bag and possession limits are 3 and 6 geese, respectively. Brant seasons may not exceed 16 consecutive days in Washington and Oregon and 30 consecutive days in California and must run concurrent with the duck season. There will be no open season on cackling Canada geese in California, Oregon, and Washington. Hunters should check regulations for further details and exceptions to the goose regulations.

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